

1987-07

# BUSM News & Notes: July 1987 no. 109

---

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/20772>

*Boston University*



Boston University  
School of Medicine

July 1987  
Issue #109

# News & Notes

## Study on fibromyalgia offers new look at chronic pain and fatigue

A new study on fibromyalgia, led by Don L. Goldenberg, M.D., a professor of medicine at the School and a rheumatologist at the University Hospital, appeared in a recent issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Goldenberg has studied and treated fibromyalgia patients for many years. The symptoms, laboratory findings and treatment results of 118 patients were the subjects of his *JAMA* report. Experience has shown that his patients do have a common condition that can be diagnosed by taking a careful history, and by conducting a thorough physical examination and a few laboratory tests. Although there is no cure now, there are therapies that help, including medications, physical therapies and exercise programs.

Fibromyalgia, commonly known as fibrositis, is a form of muscular rheumatism and is the most common cause of chronic musculoskeletal pain in women from 20 to 50 years old. According to Goldenberg, three to six million Americans (mostly women) suffer from fibromyalgia. Symptoms include headache, bowel disorders, chronic fatigue, lower-back pain, stiffness, and mood and sleep disturbances. And, because so little was known about the condition, patients have had difficulty finding help. In the past fibromyalgia has most often been described and treated as a psychosomatic disorder.

The evolution of the understanding of fibromyalgia and Goldenberg's current research are also helpful in trying to understand other chronic pain syndromes, including chronic lower-back pain, bursitis, and, possibly, what has been labeled as chronic Epstein-Barr virus syndrome.

## Batson Foundation awards funds to assist black BUSM students

The Ruth M. Batson Educational Foundation has awarded \$25,000 to a special Emergency Revolving Loan Fund for black students at the School of Medicine. The Fund, established by the Foundation last year with a gift of \$5,000, distributes grants to black students at BUSM who require immediate assistance with their expenses. The funds are used to help students buy books, clothing and medical supplies and defray their living expenses.

The Batson Foundation was established in 1969 by Ruth M. Batson, M.Ed., an associate professor of psychiatry at BUSM, to help black students from the Greater Boston area attain their educational goals. Batson is a well-known com-



**MEETING WITH STUDENTS**--Ruth M. Batson, M.Ed., recently met with about 10 students from BUSM's Early Medical School Selection Program at Boston's Museum of Afro-American History, which she has headed since 1985. It is anticipated that some of the students in the Program will benefit from this recent donation from the Batson Foundation. Shown here, from left to right, are Batson, Richard Browne, Lisa Jackson, Irvine Duplan, Keith Miller, Galen Henderson, Cheryl Greene and William Brown Jr. (Photo by Gustav Freedman)

munity activist and educational leader, and has been instrumental in efforts to deliver quality mental-health services to those in need. She was one of the founders of the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) Program and co-authored the City of Boston's racial-imbalance law, which eventually led to the desegregation of the Boston Public School system.

The School of Medicine's Early Selection Program was established three years ago to forge relationships between the School and nine predominantly black colleges in the South and in the Virgin Islands. Talented students from these schools are accepted to the School of Medicine in their junior years and are given an intense preparatory course before they begin their first year of medical school. This approach to increasing minority enrollment has become a model for other medical schools across the country.

## Fiering Scholarship and Loan Fund established at the School

Dean John I. Sandson has announced the creation of the Abraham M. and Idea S. Fiering Scholarship and Loan Fund to provide financial assistance to School of Medicine



students. A plaque honoring the late Abraham Fiering, a member of BUSM's Class of '29, and his wife, Idea, recently was dedicated outside the Office of Student Financial Management (L-315) in the Instructional Building.

The gift was made possible through a bequest from the Fierings. Before his death in 1974, the late Abraham Fiering wrote to University President John R. Silber: "I feel intense satisfaction and gratification at being able in this way to repay in some measure the institution that gave me my medical education and made it possible for me to be of service to my community, to achieve some measure of financial security and to win the respect and esteem of the people whom I have helped."

Fiering practiced medicine in Patterson, N.J. He and his wife lived in Wayne, N.J., where he was school physician and president of the Wayne State Bank. Mrs. Fiering now lives in Hackensack, N.J.

## Difficult treatment decisions in newborn nursery topic of *NEJM* article

Infants with central nervous system disorders seem to comprise the majority of difficult treatment decisions in intensive care nurseries, according to David Coulter, M.D., an associate professor of pediatrics and neurology and director of



**FIERING PLAQUE DEDICATION**--Shown at the plaque dedication, from left to right, are Dean Sandson, Idea Fiering and Fiering's cousin, Michael Fiering, M.D. (Photo by Gustav Freedman)

pediatric neurology at BUSM and at Boston City Hospital.

In a recent special article in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Coulter discussed the medical uncertainty about the diagnosis and prognosis of newborns with neurological disorders. Resolving this uncertainty is important, he said, because it often clarifies the difficult moral and ethical questions concerning the anticipated benefit from treatment and thus facilitates sound decision-making.

Coulter presented guidelines for recognizing three such conditions: brain death, a persistent vegetative state and conscious survival with disabilities, and delineated their expected outcomes. "The more time passes, the clearer the prognosis becomes," he wrote. In fact, according to Coulter, as long as neurologic uncertainty persists, "the best advice is to wait, get more information, reconsider periodically and err on the side of continued treatment." He concluded that for many such infants, "the actual outcome may be much better than anyone might expect."

## Press briefing on child health addresses AIDS, lead poisoning, violence

The challenges of treating children with acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and ways of reducing violence were among the topics at a recent press briefing on child health held at Boston City Hospital.

Faculty members speaking at the program included: Joel Alpert, M.D., chairman of the Department of Pediatrics at BUSM and director of pediatrics at BCH; George Lamb, M.D., a professor of pediatrics and public health; Deborah Prothrow-Stith, M.D., an assistant professor of medicine; David Teele, M.D., an associate professor of pediatrics; Michael Weitzman, M.D., an associate professor of pediatrics; and Barry Zuckerman, M.D., an associate profes-



**GRASBERGER LIBRARY DEDICATION**--The Robert C. Grasberger Resident Resource Library, located on Old Evans 5 at the University Hospital, was dedicated in memory of Grasberger, a UH surgical resident who died suddenly while playing basketball. The late Robert Grasberger Jr., M.D., finished his training in general surgery last June. The library contains medical books and journals. Shown in the library are, from left to right, Neil Yeston, M.D., an associate professor of surgery and anesthesiology and director of critical care at UH; Grasberger's widow, Lynn Hughes-Grasberger, M.D.; Grasberger's parents, Robert Sr. and Christine Grasberger; Robert Hobson II, M.D., chairman of the Division of Surgery and surgeon-in-chief at UH; and Erwin Hirsch, M.D., a professor of surgery, director of trauma at the Medical Center, and chief of general surgery at BCH. (Photo by David Keough, BUSM Educational Media)



sor of pediatrics. About nine representatives of the local media attended the half-day briefing, which was coordinated by Kate Nixon, director of the Office of Media Relations.

According to Lamb, 80 percent of the babies with AIDS or AIDS-related complex (ARC) are born to mothers who are unaware that they already have the disease. The diagnosis poses a new set of medical dilemmas for the mother, her family and the physician to face: the baby may die, the mother may die, and the mother must change her sexual behavior because there is a 50-percent chance that her next baby will have AIDS or ARC.

Lamb said that counseling and testing programs for high-risk pregnancies are important preventive measures. "Part of the problem when we're counseling women is that we don't really know rates of transmission," he said. "There have been women who have passed (AIDS) on to one baby, but not to another.

"In general, (in) the babies who have full-blown AIDS from the mother, the average expectancy, untreated, is eight months," Lamb continued. This is shorter than for the mother, whose post-diagnosis expectancy is about two years, he said.

Prothrow-Stith spoke about violence among adolescents and the violence-prevention curriculum that she devised for Boston Public Schools. At one Boston high school, the number of suspensions for violent behavior was reduced by two-thirds. She said that violence should be viewed as a public-health problem and approached like the anti-smoking campaign.

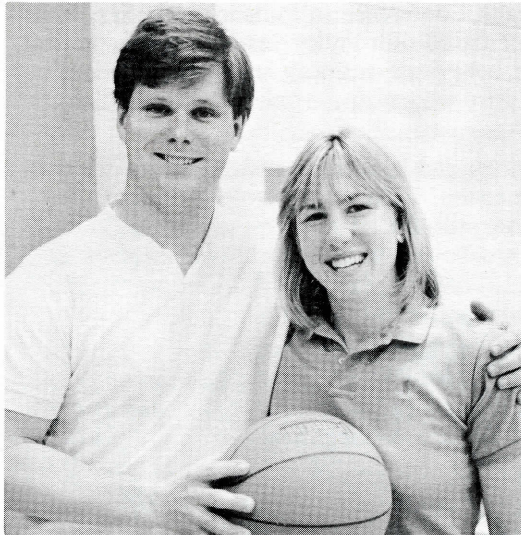
## BUSM's Noble edits key reference book for primary care physicians

John Noble, M.D., a BUSM professor of medicine, chief of the Section of General Internal Medicine and director of the Primary Care Center at Boston City Hospital, has edited a book entitled "Textbook of General Medicine and Primary Care" (Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1987). It is intended as a basic reference book for all primary care physicians in the office, clinic and emergency room.

The book is divided into four parts, with topics ranging from headaches to coronary bypass surgery and from medical genetics to substance abuse. Contributors to the textbook are authorities from all specialties of medicine.

## School of Medicine faculty members' projects featured in news media

Deborah Frank, M.D., an assistant professor of pediatrics and director of the Failure to Thrive program at Boston City Hospital, recently discussed the funding needs of her program in a feature story in the *Boston Globe*. According to Frank, the cases of malnutrition that she sees in her clinic are increasing in severity. If the Failure to Thrive Program doesn't receive more money, she said, clinic ser-



**SHOOTING HOOPS**--BUSM II student Jane DeSisto shown with her fiancé, Paul Harrity, participated in BUMC's recent Huntington's Disease Hoopathon, which raised \$17,000 worth of pledges for the UH-based Massachusetts chapter of the Huntington's Disease Foundation of America. (Photo by Richard Wood)

vices and home visits will be cut back and the waiting list for first-time clients will grow.

Deborah Prothrow-Stith, M.D., an assistant professor of medicine, also was quoted in a *Boston Globe* news story that cited violence as the leading cause of death among adolescents. She said that Americans place a high value on violence and, as a result, the homicide rate in the United States is the fifth-highest in the world. Prothrow-Stith said that homicide is the primary cause of death for black males 15 to 24 years of age. The article also discussed her anti-violence curriculum used in the Boston Public Schools to teach children that anger doesn't have to lead to fighting.

Barry Zuckerman, M.D., an associate professor of pediatrics and chief of the Division of Behavioral Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine at BCH, recently co-authored an op-ed piece for the *Boston Globe*. Zuckerman wrote that poor children are more likely to suffer from low birthweight, lead poisoning, malnutrition, abuse and neglect, problems that may lead to developmental and behavioral disorders. Health-care providers and educators must identify these high-risk children before they start school and see that they receive the special education and medical help they need.

## Walsh first woman to give Sappington Memorial Lecture

Diana Chapman Walsh, Ph.D., recently was the American Occupational Medical Association's C.O. Sappington Memorial Lecturer at the Association's annual American



Occupational Health Conference in Philadelphia. Walsh, associate director of the Health Policy Institute and a professor of social and behavioral sciences and health services at BUSM, was the first woman to be selected for the Lectureship by the Association.

Walsh has written and spoken extensively about many occupational health issues, including the role of industry in health care; the organization, financing and delivery of health care; and alcoholism and smoking policies. Her lecture was entitled, "The Vanguard and the Rearguard: Occupational Medicine Revisits its Future."

The Sappington Lectureship was established in 1954 to recognize the contributions of one of the pioneers in occupational medicine and to serve as a forum from which to address major issues in occupational health.

## BUMC Institutional Review Board announces new consent policy

The Medical Center's Institutional Review Board (IRB) has announced a new policy regarding human experimentation.

With IRB approval, an investigator may now obtain con-

sent to perform experiments from someone other than the research subject. For example, if a patient is comatose, the investigator may get consent from the spouse, according to Linda Frattura, coordinator of the IRB.

The policy applies to investigators already conducting research and to those with new research applications. For more information, contact Frattura at x7207 (638-7207).

## Upcoming CME course

*General Principles in Toxicology and Toxicologic Pathology*, sponsored by the Department of Continuing Medical Education and the Department of Pathology, will be held August 17 to 21 at the Copley Plaza Hotel.

The course will cover methods used in studying chemical toxicity and carcinogenicity in several organs; current concepts in interactions of tissues, cells and chemicals that contribute to toxic, teratogenic and carcinogenic effects.

Course directors are Adrienne Rogers, M.D., associate chairman of Pathology and a professor of toxicology, and Paul Newberne, D.V.M., Ph.D., a professor of pathology and toxicology.

*News & Notes* is a publication of the Office of Informational Services. If you have news of interest to the BUSM community, please contact editor Cynthia Koury, x8482 (638-8482) or write to her at the Office of Informational Services, DOB-600 (720 Harrison Ave., Boston, MA 02118). Marge Dwyer is managing editor.

## News & Notes

Boston University  
School of Medicine  
Office of Informational Services  
720 Harrison Avenue, Suite 600  
Boston, Massachusetts 02118

---

Non profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Boston, Mass.  
Permit No. 53312

---

BEATTIE, EMILY L  
MED LIBRARY  
80 E. CONCORD ST L12 MED45